



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS  
on the occasion of the  
INTERNATIONAL MOTHER EARTH DAY  
22 APRIL 2015**

Indigenous peoples and local communities often refer to this Earth as Pachamama or “Mother Earth.” The fate of Pachamama and of humans has been shaped over a history that has been intertwined. The proclamation of 22 April as International Mother Earth Day is an acknowledgement that biodiversity is the basis for healthy and resilient ecosystems which support the production of the food we eat, are the source of our medicines, give us clean water, protect us from extreme weather events and also provide the roots of many cultural traditions.

The proclamation of International Mother Earth day also recognizes a collective responsibility to promote harmony with nature and the Earth to achieve a balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations. It provides an opportunity to raise public awareness around the world to the challenges regarding the well-being of the planet and the life it supports.

It is also a time to draw attention to the role of indigenous and local communities and their traditional knowledge - the knowledge of the cycles of the Earth and all that lives on it.

Indigenous peoples and local communities are important actors in achieving the three goals of the Convention: the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the utilization of genetic resources. Reflecting this, the Conference of the Parties of the CBD, in 1998, established a Working Group on Article 8(j) and related provisions, as a forum to promote dialogue between indigenous and local communities and Parties, and other stakeholders. Thanks to actions under this forum, indigenous peoples are contributing significantly to implementation of the Convention.

The list of achievements is long, but it includes a Programme of Work to implement Article 8 (j); the Akwé: Kon Voluntary guidelines for the conduct of cultural, environmental and social impact assessments regarding developments proposed to take place on, or which are likely to impact on, sacred sites and on lands and waters traditionally occupied or used by indigenous and local communities; The Tkarihwaí:ri Code of Ethical Conduct to Ensure Respect for the Cultural and Intellectual Heritage of Indigenous and Local Communities Relevant to the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity; The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization; and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, particularly Target 18.

It is particularly important to note that the Nagoya Protocol provides a framework for access and benefit sharing for use of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources. The Nagoya Protocol incorporates a series of provisions addressing traditional knowledge. Its general provisions offer tools and



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mechanisms which assist in the protection of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources. The Nagoya Protocol provides, among other principles, that the access to and use of traditional knowledge should be subject to the prior informed consent or approval and involvement of the relevant indigenous and local communities (knowledge holders), that they participate in the equitable sharing of benefits derived thereof and furthermore, that this is based upon mutually agreed terms.

We need to continue working together for our Mother Earth. We need to enhance our efforts to raise public awareness of the value of biodiversity. We need to show that is a solution to the challenges of sustainable development. Biodiversity can help us realize poverty eradication, achieve food security, improve human health, aide adaptation to climate change and contribute to disaster risk reduction.

We also need each and every one of us to take concrete steps to protect biodiversity. The time for action is now – by governments, by businesses, by individuals. These actions will result in greater food security, healthier populations and improved access to clean water and sustainable energy for all, thereby ensuring an environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations.

On International Mother Earth Day, let us act now for life on earth, for a future of life in harmony with nature - the future we want.

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